

Title: Why can't we teach verbs of motion?

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Abstract:

The quick answer is that we do not teach the complexity of VOM, which includes grammar and pragmatics.

I. Grammar

1. correlation with aspectual meanings for non-prefixed verbs, all of which are imperfective;
2. meaning of each prefix;
3. effect on aspect as a result of attaching a prefix;
4. effect on stem change;
5. homonymy of prefixes (i.e. there are several sets of identical looking prefixes, for ex. there are two prefixes ПО-, two prefixes ОТ-, three prefixes С-, four prefixes ЗА- and so on) and correlation of each one with aspect and stem change.

II. Pragmatics

1. focus
2. deixis
3. viewpoint
4. knowledge

Part I involves: two types of prefixes, those that change the stem and those that don't (for ex. ПО vs. ПРИ); prefixes that can be attached only to unidirectional (ПО1), only to non-unidirectional verbs (ПО2, С1) or to both types (У, ПРИ).

The three homonymous С prefixes show the aspectual complexity, which is superimposed on the issues of attachability and stem change:

с1возить = 'to take there and back'

с2возить = 'to be in the process of bringing things down'

с3возить = 'to be in the process of bringing things together'

Part II can be exemplified by the opposition of (a)—(d) and the parameters that differentiate them:

Его (а) увезли /(b) повезли /(c) отвезли /(d) привезли в больницу.

In (a) the Speaker is at the source and focuses on the Figure (Он) being gone; in (b) the Speaker is at the source and focuses on the Figure or is traveling with the Figure; in (c) the Speaker is at the source but has second-hand knowledge of the Figure's arrival at the destination; while in (d) the Speaker is at the destination or empathizes with those at the destination.